

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0577

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, LE, US, IS, FR, UG

SUBJECT: AIR FRANCE HIJACKING

REF: (A) STATE 163239 (NOTAL), (B) LUSAKA 1702 (NOTAL),
(C) MAPUTO 746 (NOTAL)

1. AT RECEPTION HOSTED BY PRESIDENT AMIN FOLLOWING OAU SUMMIT
OPENING SESSION EVENING JULY 2 I APPROACHED WALDHEIM AND HAD BRIEF
EXCHANGE WITH HIM RE ENTEBBE HIJACKING SITUATION. HE SAID: "PLEASE
TELL YOUR SECRETARY OF STATE THAT I AM DOING ALL IN MY POWER TO BE
HELPFUL." HE HAD HAD NO DIRECT NEWS SINCE DEPARTING MAPUTO EARLIER
IN DAY. WALDHEIM SAID HE HAD HAD A BRIEF CONVERSATION WITH AMIN
PRIOR TO OAU SUMMIT OPENING SESSION AND THEY HAD SCHEDULED ANOTHER
MEETING FOR THIS MORNING (10 A.M. LOCAL JULY 3). WALDHEIM
REMARKED THAT AMIN "LIKES TO RUN THE WHOLE SHOW," SO IT IS
DIFFICULT TO GET HIM TO DO WHAT ONE WANTS. WALDHEIM THOUGHT
THERE WAS SOME ADVANTAGE IN THE FACT THAT THE UNDP REP IN
KAMPALA WHOM HE HAD INSTRUCTED TO GET INVOLVED IS AN AFRICAN
(GHANAIA). HE ALSO REMARKED THAT AMIN HAD SAID HE WANTED THE
ISRAELIS TO COME TO KAMPALA TO NEGOTIATE.

2. NEITHER AMIN NOR WALDHEIM ATTENDED A MAURITIAN CEREMONY WHICH
PRECEDED FIRST WORKING SESSION OF OAU SUMMIT MORNING OF JULY 3.

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3. ALSO HAD A BRIEF ENCOUNTER WITH AMIN AT HIS RECEPTION. EXCHANGE WAS FRIENDLY, REMARKABLY SO CONSIDERING THAT AT OUR LAST MEETING IN KAMPALA IN OCTOBER 1973 HE THREATENED TO ARREST ALL AMERICANS IN UGANDA STARTING WITH ME IF U.S. INTERVENED ON SIDE OF ISRAEL IN WAR THEN UNDERWAY IN MIDDLE EAST. AMIN INVITED ME TO KAMPALA AND SAID HE NOW HAS FIFTY AMERICANS IN UGANDA ADVISING HIS AIR FORCE. A MEMBER OF HIS ENTOURAGE (BYAGAGAI) LATER CORRECTED THIS TO ABOUT FIVE AMERICANS PROVIDING TECHNICAL HELP AND SERVING AS PILOTS FOR THEIR NEW INTERNAL AIRLINE, AIR UGANDA.

4. AMIN DISCUSSED HIJACKING IN COURSE OF HIS EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS AT OAU OPENING. IN A BOASTFUL FASHION, HE MADE FOLLOWING POINTS: (A) ALTHOUGH HE HAD NOT INVITED HIJACKERS TO UGANDA, HE HAD PERMITTED PLANE TO LAND FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS; (B) FACT THAT EUROPEANS WERE AMONG HIJACKERS SHOWED THAT PALESTINIANS ENJOY WORLD-WIDE SUPPORT; (C) FOR FIRST TIME IN HISTORY HOSTAGES HAVE BEEN PERMITTED TO LEAVE PLANE AND SEEK COMFORT IN AIRPORT TRANSIT LOUNGE; (D) HE HAD WORKED HARD TO GET AS MANY HOSTAGES RELEASED AS POSSIBLE; (E) HE HAD COMPLIED WITH HIJACKERS' DEMANDS REGARDING RELEASE OF ONLY PART OF HOSTAGE GROUP BECAUSE THEY WERE "SURROUNDED" BY EXPLOSIVES AND WERE IN DANGER OF BEING KILLED; (F) "SOME OF THE ISRAELI HOSTAGES ARE "INNOCENT", SO THEY SHOULD NOT BE KILLED; (G) AS A RESULT OF THIS INCIDENT, HE HAD RECEIVED SEVERAL PHONE CALLS FROM ISRAEL, FOR FIRST TIME SINCE HE HAD BROKEN RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL IN 1972. AMIN REMARKED THAT HE WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN OAU SUMMIT AS HE HAD A PROBLEM AT HOME THAT HE HAD TO DEAL WITH. THIS HAS LED TO SPECULATION THAT AMIN WILL RETURN TO KAMPALA, POSSIBLY TODAY, JULY 3, TO CONTINUE DEALING WITH HIJACKERS. A MEMBER OF HIS DELEGATION (PAUL ETIANG) TOLD ME LAST NIGHT THAT THIS WAS PROBABLE.
KEELEY

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